

MARTOR



Title: "Doctor Kéri's Museum of Galoșpetreu, Bihor County (Romania). An Attempt to Edify Proximity Heritage"

Authors: Maria Mateoniu, Rodica Marinescu

How to cite this article: Mateoniu, Maria and Rodica Marinescu. 2009. "Doctor Kéri's Museum of Galoșpetreu, Bihor County (Romania). An Attempt to Edify Proximity Heritage". *Martor* 14: 145-154.

Published by: *Editura MARTOR* (MARTOR Publishing House), *Muzeul Țăranului Român* (The Museum of the Romanian Peasant)

URL: <http://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/archive/martor-14-2009/>

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**Doctor Kéri's Museum of Galoşpetreu, Bihor County (Romania)
An Attempt to Edify Proximity Heritage**

Maria Mateoniu, Rodica Marinescu

The heritage domain is known to have expanded from the exclusive collection of works of art to the representation of cultural and social diversity. The field has thus been anthropologised by shifting attention from objects to social relations, to the relationship between man and his living environment and also democratised by acknowledging the minorities' right to self-determination (see Poulot, 2006). Imposed by the West during the colonial period, the unique 'art-culture' system Clifford talks about is replaced today by a promotion of cultural plurality (Clifford, 1988). Therefore, we can talk about levelled values and relative criteria for cultural interpretation to such an extent that monuments and, generally speaking, heritage objects 'are no longer significant by themselves but become a fragmented material of a generic representation of ourselves.' (Choay, 1998: 185)

The 2003 UNESCO convention for safeguarding intangible heritage is the consequence of this change in understanding the meaning of heritage, of development and promotion of local and community relations. 'The *intangible cultural heritage* means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural

heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.'

The convention undoubtedly reflects a state of fact, acknowledging both the local communities' and the individuals' right to constitute and promote their own intangible heritage. The case of the collector **Kéri Gáspár** from **Galoşpetreu** that will be presented here is in my opinion relevant to what can be generically called an individual initiative to promote both tangible and intangible proximity heritage. Apart from the syncretism of his knowledge, Kéri Gáspár from Galoşpetreu acts as a tradition carrier and actor alike. He is not a passive preserver of local traditions but acts as their promoter and manager. Kéri elaborates a complete local development programme for which, apart from the old objects collected with passion and great care, he makes recourse to his knowledge of history and regional ethnography.

**Kéri Gáspár and his museum of Galoşpetreu.
Fieldwork record**

Kéri Gáspár was born in 1952 in Galoşpetreu, a village situated in north-western Romania on

Valea Ierului (the Ier Valley), in Bihor County. He graduated from the primary school in his native village and then from the high-school in Săcueni. He obtained a degree in stomatology in Târgu-Mureş after he gained enough experience working as a dental technician. He started his activity in Sălacea, a commune situated 6 km east of Galoşpetreu. He has been living in Săcueni with his family for a few years. Here he opened a dentistry centre together with his wife who is also a dentist born in the same area, more precisely in Marghita commune. Both are ethnic Hungarians, he is a Protestant whereas his wife is a Roman-Catholic. They have three children – a daughter who is a student of stomatology and two sons who learn in Săcueni, one being a high-school student, the other being a primary school pupil. Apart from being a dentist and collector alike, which is quite time-consuming, doctor Kéri is involved in the social and political life of Săcueni village. He briefly held the office of local advisor of UDMR (the Ethnic Hungarians' Union of Romania) and subsequently he ran for the same office as an independent candidate.

I met Kéri Gáspár in April 2008. He was all smiles, kind and affable while waiting for us in Oradea station. We were coming from Bucharest to carry out research - a case study – that implied, among other things, an agreement whereby the collector committed himself to participating in a training workshop organised by MTR (see Proiect, Martor, the current issue).

It rarely happens to find a welcoming person like doctor Kéri, as we got used to calling him, with a predilection for conversation and confession. I noticed that the very moment we met. He gave us a lift from Oradea to Săcueni (the collector is satisfied with his Skoda Octavia because he thinks that it is roomy enough for the whole family), an enjoying trip around the area of the Ier Valley – a geographically and historically particular region situated within the Romanian-Hungarian border area.

The idea of building a museum meant to represent the Ier Valley came to him many years

before. It materialised in 2002 when he managed to open the first private museum in Galoşpetreu, his native village. The museum is quite isolated if we take into account the unasphalted road which links the locality to the neighbouring villages.

The village of Galoşpetreu, Gálospetri in Hungarian, lies on the right side of the Ier terrace, about 55 km north of the city of Oradea and 15 km north of Săcueni. Administratively affiliated to the commune of Tarcea, the multiethnic and multiconfessional village is inhabited mainly by ethnic Hungarians. Marriages between people of different religions are quite frequent, the Gáspár family being a very good example. Doctor Kéri is a Protestant while his wife is a Roman-Catholic. According to a local unwritten rule, the girl was baptised in her mother's Roman-Catholic faith whereas the boy was baptised as a Protestant Christian like his father.

Most active inhabitants work in the neighbouring towns of Săcueni and Valea lui Mihai. However, many of them left the village to work abroad, particularly in Hungary, where most of them have relatives. As a matter of fact, crossing the border is a common thing today since the relationships between the two countries have been substantially consolidated after 1989.

Galoşpetreu is an old village attested ever since 1291 under the name of Villa Petri. An older locality was situated here but it was completely destroyed by the Tartars in 1241. The archaeological traces, historical monuments and natural elements make the landscape highly attractive. However, despite the heritage resources attentively evaluated by the authorities, the locality is still deprived of the relevant infrastructure that should facilitate its connection with other villages. It has no sewerage system, gas facilities and asphalted roads. Only 0.7 km of the 10 km-long intra-urban road of Tarcea commune is asphalted. Therefore, the infrastructure remains a priority for the authorities, most projects aiming to solve these urgent problems.

Galoşpetreu lies on the Ier Valley, Érmellek in Hungarian, an area with a particular landscape

dramatically changed by man and nature along the time; according to the locals, this region seemed to be by far more beautiful than the Danube Delta. Moreover, says Kéri Gáspár, 'what happened here was even more specific because there was no end of river but something that took shape after the Ice Age was over. So this was something absolutely specific.' Unfortunately, in the 1960's the central authorities ordered that the Ier Valley should be drained in order to provide propitious conditions for intensive agriculture. The ecosystem was thus radically changed. Draining the Ier Valley was an issue that had been considered ever since the 1930's but the project failed to materialize when the war broke out. In 1960 the authorities resumed the discussion on this matter and approved the beginning of drainage works. The final decision was taken in 1965. 54,000 ha of marshes were drained in 1967. It was the beginning of the end for this 'corner of Paradise' that was once considered 'the fishermen's land'. 'Unfortunately, a Hungarian engineer did it, so we cannot even blame the Romanians for that, says doctor Kéri humorously. The land was not propitious for agriculture whereas, nor were the canals appropriately maintained. The destruction of this beautiful area is the major problem of nature lovers.' The area can be only partially restored by a collective decision. A project meant to redesign a part of the area is supported by Pro Valea Ierului Association based in Valea lui Mihai locality, which is made up of most local representatives. Unfortunately, this project only 'exists in theory', states Kéri, with hardly any impact on the communities. 'I was already in my teens at the time and I know what the Ier Valley originally looked like. [The inhabitants] lived down the Ier Valley, in Galoșpetreu, in a part of Tarcea village and in the village of Checereul, Sălacea. They made a living as fishermen... Each of them had his own area, as it now happens [only] in the Danube Delta. [I have] my own area where I go fishing. They earn their living as fishermen and [also] as harvesters of reed and of something softer, I don't know its

name, used to make baskets. They exported a lot of mace reed. They earned good money at the time. The flora was extraordinary. You could find anything here, wild ducks, geese, anything. Land [is] the real problem. A part of it was given to people. [The landowners] should not cultivate it, nor should they get money for it or... (Bordoș Caroly, mayor of Tarcea commune)

The difficulty of convincing the villagers of the efficiency of remapping projects in the area is doubled by the general administrative deadlock and by the poor relations between the local and central authorities.

Why set up a museum in Galoșpetreu ?

Despite the difficulties over the area's remapping, doctor Kéri Gáspár decided to set up a museum in Galoșpetreu meant to represent the Ier Valley or, more specifically, the specific elements of this ethnographic area.

His endeavor is motivated by the fact that neither the authorities nor the specialists in the field took the Ier Valley into consideration before the fall of communism. 'The Țara Crișurilor Museum did not take care of this area. Not at all! In fact, the people in this area, especially the intellectuals, came up with the idea that there was no specific ethnography here. I said to myself that God cannot be seen, though He exists. We also have a specific ethnographic area which has to be searched for and brought to light. I must say that communism disseminated the idea that the culture of the minorities should not be protected. Nobody studied history, [I am referring to] the history of the minorities. It was forbidden.' Therefore, the ban the Hungarians had to observe during the communist period and excessive control determined Kéri Gáspár to militate for their rights after the fall of the regime. When he was young, he heard people saying that the Ier Valley could not boast its traditional costume, customs and history. 'The Ier Valley had no specific folk costume. The teachers and priests alike used to say that our region had no specific folk cos-

tume. On the contrary, it did have such a one. That's why I searched for it. I got an impulse to look for it. I think it's important to see that we have our own specific history, traditional costume and ethnography.'

Kéri is doing his best to discover the 'real' history and ethnography, the 'unforged' facts of the past, as he likes to say. The two subjects help him prove the specificity of the Ier Valley area. 'Only this way [history included] can we understand ethnography. History is tightly connected with [the place] in which [different populations] originate. This is because I also gather historical and archaeological documents. I gather anything related to the material and spiritual culture of this area. [...] I cannot understand ethnography without history, meaning not only the date and epoch when the house was built, but also the economic situation and the way in which people lived and came there. It's a process. [...] Ethnography mirrors these things as well as the economic situation at the time whereas history shows why they did this way.'

In other words, the doctor rejects the official ethnography and history disseminated by the local and national institutions. His life experience, 'research' and memories determined him to prove the contrary. His childhood was marked by the story of the life of his mother's uncle accused of treason and executed by the communists during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. His wife and children were deported to Bărăgan and their fortune was confiscated by the state, except for a few history and ethnography books Kéri Gáspár came across in an old shabby storehouse he insisted on showing us. This was a gesture meant to render the authenticity of a family history that is still living in his memory. 'This is the grain storehouse and the priest is the brother of my father's mother. This is their house. It was inherited. The priest was imprisoned whereas his family was deported to Bărăgan, which made them bring a lot of books and documents here. I used to read these documents and I was deeply moved. They influenced me to such a great extent that I start-

ed searching for such things. I couldn't do it earlier because communism forbade us to exhibit, gather, write and publish these things. The 1989 Revolution made it possible.'

Old materials discovered due to his family's misfortunes enticed him to understand the past of his birthplace from an early age. Later on, after having read specialized books that helped him understand what a 'peasant museum' means, he had the idea of collecting old objects in order to build a museum in Galoşpetreu. He thought that such a museum could be designed in his grandparents' house inherited from his mother and aunt. 'Where did the idea come from? It came from some books on ethnography brought from Hungary and Cluj. They said that the peasant museum – what does it mean? – is a complete peasant household with all its relevant extensions, which belongs to a certain social situation and to a certain age.' This age ranges from the end of the 19th to the dawn of the 20th century.' The end of the 19th century seems to be suitable for doctor Kéri because it corresponds to the period when his grandparents lived and also because this was a flourishing age for the culture of the Ier Valley.

Kéri thus aims to refurbish his grandparents' household in order to render its original appearance: 'a household which belongs to a mixed family of middle Hungarian peasants.' He reconstructed minutely the roof, the gates, the barn at the entrance and the draw well for the house to bear the mark of the original. In the neighbouring village of Sălacea he discovered a few old outbuildings (a stable, a shed and a pigsty) that he purchased and brought to his museum of Galoşpetreu. 'I bought [the outbuildings] from Sălacea and then I moved them. So my grandparents' house and the land [inherited] from my mother and aunt are there. I refurbished them... there is also a cellar there. Otherwise all buildings would have been destroyed. This is why I brought the shed, the stable...and the pigsty from Sălacea because they were by far better [pre-

served] there. So I brought them from a neighboring commune.'

The outbuildings are carefully uninstalled and then reinstalled according to well-thought-out sketches and plans. The building plans were designed by an architect specially employed for this undertaking. 'I was there when he first made the sketch of the shed and the pigsty. [...] This architect built them according to our sketch.'

In other words, only the house (consisting of three rooms, a pantry and a large wooden veranda) and the cellar were inherited from his grandparents. The remaining outbuildings have been reconstructed whereas the objects and furniture have been purchased along the time. 'First of all, this house belonged to my grandparents. It is a 10-15-ha peasant household. Yeomen, rich peasants and landowners lived here [at that time]. This was a middle peasant too. I looked for a similar stately house [with outbuildings] that was a perfect copy of the same household. This is because a well-to-do farmer had a larger, more stately and different [house]. And then [...] I moved the shed and the stable from just one single yard.'

The collector reconstructed his grandparents' house with utmost care. Nothing is built at random, the details of such an undertaking being of paramount importance. 'What was the idea? The idea was that I had to be faithful to the original model. I don't know if I put it right. [...] Just faithful. What happened? [I thought that] the best way was to move what was in place. There was no way out because the beams were made accordingly and had an appropriate length. So if I had done more the roof would have been a misfit. The idea was [to move] the wood material and the adobe bricks. I uninstalled the door, the windows and the roof and brought them all to Galoşpetreu.'

Kéri is obsessed with being 'faithful to the minutest details of what was before'. For instance, the wooden entrance gate has been modified many times to render the original as 'faithfully' as possible.

'The Museum as a model and indicator'. From objects to meanings

Doctor Kéri's museum is well-known in the region due to newspaper articles and the website of Tarcea City Hall. 'The Landscape House', also called 'the Traditional Peasant House' is presented at length on this site, being perceived as a unique and massive individual initiative throughout the area.

Though the museum is not authorised yet, the admission is free. When the chores he has to do in Săcueni – where he actually lives – prevent him from providing explanations to the visitors who come to Galoşpetreu, Balogh Zsolt, the Protestant minister of the village, serves as their guide. We were told that the minister 'owns the keys' to the museum. As a matter of fact, the easy-to-find museum is situated at a crossroad, a stone's throw away from the rectory and the Protestant Church.

The walls of the 'Traditional Peasant House' are made of beaten soil whereas the roof is made of reed, a symbol of the Ier Valley's former vegetation. The house has an entrance hall, a balcony and sculpted pillars 'typical of the area'. A single entrance connects the veranda with the kitchen. On the right-hand side of the middle room lies the mouth of the oven around which the collector arranged kitchen cupboards packed with ceramic vessels. Most of them were brought from the neighbouring village of Marghita, a ceramics centre hardly known by national museum experts. A boy's and a girl's school sack, a 1901 catechism, a 1914 maths notebook, a geography handbook and a Hungarian handbook of history hang on a peg. Hungarian plates are neatly arranged on the walls whereas wooden water jugs originating in the Apuseni Mountains are exhibited in a corner. An eye-catching red-threaded hemp towel once played a mere decorative role, says the doctor.

The kitchen door leads to the 'Protestant room' (looking out on the road) that represents the Protestant grandfather of our host. Apart from valuable icons, the walls are covered in

family paintings, one of them representing the portrait of Sandor Antal, the first owner of the house. The most priceless pieces of furniture (a table, a bed and dowry chests) are exhibited in this 'good room' (the Protestant room). He bought the urban furniture from a single family. The Bible and several religious objects are carefully arranged on a table near the window while the grandparents' painting hangs on a wall. The 19th-century metal stove was made in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. An excerpt from the Bible written on cardboard hangs on a wall, the same as in his grandparents' house. In a small cupboard on the same wall hangs a bride's coronet exhibited according to an old local custom. Many objects and documents reveal both the social rank of the house owners and their faith and the local traditional activities, such as an 1899 sealed and stamped certificate of graduation of a viticulture school of Diosig.

The oldness and authenticity of the objects is proven and explained; they are the fruit of an endless search and reconstruction. The collector prompts us to look at a copy of a partially destroyed metal-frame picture, one of the oldest photos that have been preserved, representing two traditionally dressed Hungarian peasants. Kéri argues that this carefully preserved photo stands for the oldest image of the typical costume of the Ier Valley. In order to convince us, Kéri showed us a few costume items preserved in the dowry chest that can be found in the 'Protestant room'. 'You may have noticed that I managed to learn about the male folk costume and partially about the female one. I couldn't find a clear picture. But I'm going to show you some traces. The costume has changed in time, but it was specific to the 19th and 20th centuries. The costume in this area included elements of civic society. However, it was a folk costume. Why? Simply because people wore it. Everybody was dressed the same. For instance, in the 1970's I went to Sălăcea where I had relatives. On Sunday afternoons all men gathered in the centre of the commune and wore the same costume in the same colours. As

far as I remember, the costume was green. It was also specific to Oradea, though, unlike Sălăcea, not all men [were] dressed the same. The idea was that all men had to be dressed the same.'

As soon as we get out of the kitchen, we enter 'The Catholic room' lying at the other end of the house on the right-hand side. It symbolizes the collector's Catholic grandmother. A few icons representing the Virgin with the Infant Jesus are displayed here. This corner of the house is a reconstruction of the space where his family lived. The two functional beds are simply arranged, without large laced pillows like those in the 'Protestant room'. A few small kitchen tools and toys that are miniature forms of large objects are exhibited around the kitchen range and the large limewashed oven. Thus, one can notice that doctor Kéri exhibited here a specific type of reed lounge chair with different sizes: big in order to be suitable for an adult, small in order to be good for a child and in miniature, as a toy. Technically speaking, there are a few remarkable ingenious objects: a curling iron, hemp-ironing tools, a secret-opening razor to protect children and a special cupboard, 'teica' (trough), which sheltered palinka, prayer stuff, candles and other small essential objects.

Objects indispensable to any peasant household can be found in the pantry, cellar, shed and stable: 'a two-section box where the church's money used to be kept. The priest and the psalm reader had different keys'; pickles, flour and bran containers; an 'archaic' meat mincing machine; a bowel cleaning machine; another archaic type of bread basket; a box in which 'fruit and vegetables are carried to the market'; a 'potato-smashing machine used to feed the pigs'; 'a child's fold', 'oil, vinegar and paprika recipients'; 'cereal measuring tools' and many others.

Detached from the house and deeply dug in the ground, the cellar shelters all vine care and harvesting tools and wine recipients: [vine cutting] 'trimming scissors'; 'three different and evolution-proof' vine cutting knives engraved with the craftsman's initial letters, a plug, wine bottles,

a goblet, a squeezer, a vine bird scarer bearing the owner's name, a cellar candle holder, grape-carrying barrels, for 'women harvested them while men carried them and pressed them with their feet', etc.

'The nutrition room and the cart's place' can be found in the stable. Accompanied by Kéri to the shed, we 'examine' the fishing boat, the net, the fish pond, the sleigh, the archaic plough, the harrow and 'all household stuff [once] used.'

The museum of Galoşpetreu enjoys the authorities' support as much as the EU funds allow it, most projects aiming at reshuffling the infrastructure. '[The doctor's museum] is beautiful and necessary because the collected objects would otherwise be lost. Perhaps it should only develop and benefit from more money. The doctor does everything on his own, without any help from the others. This is his mission and he puts his best into it. If somebody comes here, they will undoubtedly visit the museum. I don't show them the field because they won't see anything there' (Bordaş Carol, mayor of Tarcea commune).

The museum is appreciated by small local investors too. Ludovic Kovacs, a guest house owner and wine producer, states that better roads and 'more museums like doctor Kéri's' would be extremely useful for tourism development. 'If I go elsewhere, I visit museums and churches, [I see] what is the most beautiful and well-known thing in that specific locality. My wife took her 1st to 4th-grade pupils to doctor Kéri's museum. She can't help taking them there... Anyway, I have an idea of what to do with tourism. A booklet should be disseminated at different fairs, so we should start together. Accommodation should be promoted, people should know us. Hungary is well organised in this respect. People should learn about us.' (L. Kovacs).

The museum is a real source whereby local values are handed down from one generation to another; it is frequently visited by groups of pupils and teachers who come from the surrounding villages. 'It is me or the priest who is

the guide of the pupils. I usually prefer small groups because [the museum] cannot host more than 50 persons. I also asked the teachers to tell their pupils during counseling classes what they are going to see and what happens here. They ought to have background knowledge because it's different from a sugar or chocolate factory. They must be prepared. I also proposed that ethnography classes should be taught here as part of the Hungarian literature curriculum. So the focus should be on practice, or otherwise they will not [understand] anything.

However, despite such educational visits, most villagers from Galoşpetreu consider that the doctor has a peculiar passion for traditions which is nothing but the whim of an intellectual different from the other villagers. We realise that from the very conversation mediated by the collector's father, Kéri Gáspár Senior, a Hungarian-speaking agriculturist born in 1926. The old Kéri does not understand why his son turned the old inherited house into a museum. So do his neighbours who are average people, agriculturists or commuting workers.

Most objects in the archaic household have been bought or acquired by doctor Kéri in exchange for medical services. 'Few objects have been donated. I bought most of them, some of them being very expensive. Even my relatives asked me to pay for them.' It seems that the locals have lost any connection with the past and no longer lay so much stress on the sentimental value of old objects. 'They only know that the merchants come here and ask for money and if they do so, [the locals] say that they want money too. So this is their idea and, consequently, there are few donations.' Trade with old objects was also practiced during the communist regime, but 'it flourished after the 1989 Revolution... For instance, there are three merchants of this kind in Săcueni... I buy objects from one of them because we are on good terms.'

Knowing the doctor's passion for old objects, the locals from Galoşpetreu often try to sell them for extremely high prices. 'They are not fair all

the time. [...] Sometimes I am absent-minded, [absorbed] by the work I have to do in Galoşpetreu. People are still working there and they are not... as if they were the ones who hold a degree, not me [...] I will show you a few weaving samples there. I was on very good terms with an old lady who told me that she would sell those sacks and that I would set my own price. The sacks were made of fabric. She sold them for 30,000 per item. I agreed because it was worth it. After we got the deal, she asked for 50,000 and I paid 3,700,000 lei [...] I was ashamed to tell her that she had broken the deal.'

Kéri Gáspár has collected countless objects. His collection comprises between 1500 and 2000 objects and it's only partially inventoried. A part of them have been cleaned and restored. Aurel Chiriac, director of the Țara Crişurilor Museum, archaeologist Călin Ghemiş, professor Gazda Klara at the University of Cluj and Balassa Ivan, director of the Ethnographic Museum of the Hungarian town of Szentendre gave him advice on object treatment and care so that the museum could meet all authorisation requirements. Though no longer young, Kéri is willing to learn and collaborate with everybody. His participation in the training workshop organised by the Romanian Peasant Museum in September 2008 within the project including the present research stands solid proof of that.

Personal identity means to Kéri ongoing search and learning; it means a permanent questioning of personal values by meeting other people, particularly specialists in ethnography and history. They influence him to such an extent that he frequently changes his views. For instance, the veranda of the house in Galoşpetreu is subject to various changes function of the suggestions they make. We notice certain changes compared to the photos that the collector insisted on showing us. They were taken in 2002 at the opening of the museum. A fretwork decoration on the pillars and eaves was removed because it did not fit into the original aspect of the house. Thus, the museum faces successive changes and

adaptations function of the collector's memories, of the knowledge acquired from different books and of his meetings with specialists.

Despite the fact that Kéri Gáspár refurbishes in Galoşpetreu a mixed Hungarian household typical of the end of the 19th century, exhibiting plenty of peasant objects specially chosen for this purpose, his collection is by far more diverse. The village museum should include characteristic objects, so I cannot exhibit a history book there because the peasants had no such thing. But the museum of Săcueni will host a historical, ethnographic and archaeological exhibition.' Ethnographic objects, numismatics, old books and archive documents are about to be displayed. The doctor's collection also includes the reports of an association of viticulturists that has been in place since the 19th century, the 1872 'act of foundation' of the bank of Săcueni and many others.

The museum of the town of Săcueni could be a tentative exhibition place. Administered by the local council, this museum is now being refurbished, an action in which doctor Kéri was directly involved while an advisor. Before the works started, doctor Kéri benefited from an exhibition space in this museum where he particularly displayed 'fishermen's objects.'

Apart from the exhibition he wants to mount again in this museum when the refurbishing works are over, Kéri is trying to get involved in other activities related to local heritage capitalisation. The collector often 'probes' the region and evaluates its potential for a future efficient remapping. Doctor Kéri is building a peasant house in Sălăcea according to old models in order to capitalise on the natural and architectural landscape of the area. He is extremely familiar with the village because he worked here as a dentist for many years. The villagers know him very well and provide him objects and information. Lying 4 km from Galoşpetreu, the village of Sălăcea is well-known for its viticulture tradition. A viticulture area ever since the 16th century, the Ier Valley includes the oldest wine routes of Transylvania and preserves many cellars dug in the

ground, one of them reaching the impressive length of around 40 metres. 1000 cellars of this kind have been preserved in Sălacea. It so happens that Kéri built the peasant house near the cellars, a place to be visited by more and more tourists in the near future (after the infrastructure is rehabilitated!), as he opines.

Doctor Kéri is currently involved in a project run in association with Hungarian partners. It aims to preserve and promote traditional architecture. 'I noticed that in the countryside many people follow a person who starts doing something, be it something wrong, such as a change in the house structure. They modify the main beam and when an earthquake occurs, for this is a seismic zone, the house falls apart. And its dwellers could die [where they changed the structure]. [Not only] safety, [but] also aesthetics is endangered. And yet, they do bad things because somebody starts doing something and so do the others. The ethnographer must intervene at this point and [tell them] that what they do is not good. That's exactly what I want to do now by means of a project. I have a Hungarian partner. We want to write a book that will also contain photos of all important popular institutions that are still quite appropriately maintained: buildings, cellars, dwellings, churches, etc. We'll write about their beauty, about how people should take care of [them] and how they should avoid modifying [them]. We'll also provide examples of what people shouldn't do. Everyone will get a book. The City Hall will get one too because its employees lack experience. It's just because of their education. We can't ask somebody to live up to our expectations if they've never been the way we want them to be. We shouldn't be angry, we only have to be aware of positives and negatives. It's not easy but we have to start doing something about that. It's like gossip in the countryside. Someone starts gossiping and then the gossip spreads around the village. I hope we'll make it.'

Kéri Gáspár is a special local industrious person and, above all, a faithful reconstructor of a family history rendered in its material aspect. It is

due to this reconstruction that he 'militates' for local identity and is in search of a meaning both for himself and his fellows. He wants the museum of Galoşpetreu to serve as 'an experience, a model and an indicator.' Because 'we must leave some things of the past to the present and future generations. It would be a pity if these values were lost and we would be much poorer without this material culture which is the faithful testimony of what happened here a hundred years ago...'

Museums should be 'fortresses against globalisation', says Kéri, where the good things of the past are preserved in order to be subsequently reused. 'Uniformity is absurd. Both people and communities are different and we have to accept that. The same happens with language and culture. Everybody is beautiful in their own way. That's exactly what globalisation wants. It wants us to wear the same clothes. I imagined these museums to be a kind of fortress against globalisation. They help us defend ourselves and attack our foes. We hope that we'll win like Iancu of Hunedoara who defeated the Turks in Belgrade.'

Preserving and reconstructing the past, we actually project our future, says Kéri Gáspár. 'If countryside houses rely on the experience of the [past] experience, they will be more comfortable. If a modern house is not equipped with air conditioning, one cannot [stay] indoors more than ten minutes. On the contrary, it's a lovely temperature in a household both in summer and in winter. [...] Many new houses in Săcueni are made of adobe bricks and [are] more resistant and also cheaper and better for our body. They are environment-friendly, as we say today. [...] All houses should be made of wood or clay and people should take this heritage into account. This kind of construction is a sort of inheritance from our predecessors. Why not use what is good? Any house should be partitioned in a modern yet different style, but the motifs, the doors, the windows, the painting or the roof [should be old]. Traditional countryside houses are absolutely beautiful.'

The Kéri Gáspár case could be a role model for the present Romania where efforts are being

made to edify heritage proximity relations. Doctor Kéri is not a collector of useless objects. By making recourse to material culture, he reconstructs the collective past of his native region with the same minuteness with which he projects its future. Reconstruction is the result of a perfect conflation of personal memories with solid knowledge acquired after a long period of documentation. Information culled from history and ethnography books adds to the image of his child-

hood and his grandparents' stories. At the same time, he is a visionary and a forerunner in terms of capitalisation of values. The passion for looking honestly into the personal and the collective past gives a sense to his existence. This does not prevent him from capitalising on his knowledge of local history and ethnography and from reappropriating values that the community is still ready to rediscover.

Notes:

¹ Tarcea commune consists of three villages: Tarcea, the village bearing the same name, Adoni and Galoşpetreu.

² Like all over Romania, the number of inhabitants is dropping: 1032 inhabitants in 1886, 1025 in 1992 and 987 in 2002 (according to City Hall statistics). The 1992 census showed that 838 people were ethnic Hungarians, 141 Romanians, 35 Roma (according to B. Zoltan, 1996), of whom 653 were Protestants, 249 Greek-Catholics, 56 Roman-Catholics, 30 Baptists and 25 Orthodox Christians (according to B. Zoltan).

³ The oldest traces in Galoşpetreu date from the Neolithic Age and are found in a place called Movila Legii. Three cottages and the churches of the four religious groups (Protestants, Greek-Catholics, Roman-Catholics and Baptists) of the village have been preserved from the landowners who lived here. They are expected to be rehabilitated and included in a tourist circuit.

The oldest Protestant Church was erected in 1621 and rebuilt in 1855. The Baptist prayer house, the most recent prayer place, was built in 1928. The Greek-Catholic Church has been in place since 1892. According to Kéri, it has a very beautiful iconostasis. However, the history of the Roman-

Catholic Church retrieved from both the monographs he studied and from her Catholic grandmother's memories is 'the most interesting'. In 1855 the owner of Otomani, the neighbouring commune, built a chapel here during the reign of Empress Maria Tereza. The landowner's family disappeared during the interwar period because it had no descendants. Since most inhabitants were Protestants, the chapel was moved to Galoşpetreu. Built in 1956 in a period when the building of churches was forbidden, a new church replaced the chapel as a result of a good-willed Shwab party secretary.

In 1956 a curator decided to build a Roman-Catholic church here. A Catholic Schwab party secretary asked the curator to write a request related to the building of the Catholic Church (the communists banned the building of churches at the time). He mixed it with other documents and his 'comrades' failed to read it [carefully] and signed it. [The locals] started to build the church. [The communists] appealed to the militia forces. 'You're building a church when Marxism-Leninism is your true religion?' Then [the locals] showed them the signed document. The communists couldn't say anything and they erected the church (Kéri Gáspár, April 2008).

⁴ http://www.tarcea.ro/foldrajzi_ro.html

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